

TITANIC PROJECT TO GIVE CITY A RIVER.

Thirty Thousand Inches of Water to be Brought to Los Angeles.

Options Secured on Forty Miles of River Frontage in Inyo County—Magnificent Stream to be Conveyed Down to the Southland in Conduit Two Hundred and Forty Miles Long—Stupendous Deal Closed.

INDEPENDENCE (Cal.) July 28.—[Exclusive Dispatch.] Agents representing Los Angeles city have secured options on about forty miles of frontage on the Owens River north of Owens Lake. Fred Eaton, ex-Mayor of Los Angeles, and the superintendent of the Los Angeles water works were in the valley in an automobile the early part of this week. Two days ago they closed the last outstanding options. The price paid for many of the ranches is three or four times what the owners ever expected to sell them for. Everybody in the valley has money, and everyone is happy.

Three months ago Eaton bought the holdings of the Rickey Cattle Company, comprising about 50,000 acres of water-bearing land. It was then thought that Eaton was going into the stock-raising business here, but it has since been learned that he was securing options for Los Angeles city. Eaton has made every option solid and secured all the land the city wanted. The deal is riveted.

THE cable that has held the San Fernando Valley vassal for ten centuries to the arid demon is about to be severed by the magic scimitar of modern engineering skill. Back to the headwaters of the Los Angeles River will be turned the flow of a thousand mountain streams that ages ago were tributaries of the current that swept past the site of the ancient pueblo of Los Angeles to the ocean.

The desert has yielded up its wealth. The problem of Los Angeles' water supply has been solved for the next hundred years. Thirty thousand inches of the purest snow water is to be taken from the bed of the Owens River in Inyo county, right in the heart of the Sierra Nevada Mountains and conveyed for a distance of 240 miles over arid plains and through the heart of mountain ranges to be emptied into mighty reservoirs at the headworks of the Los Angeles water system.

Already the United States government has given its consent; the route has been surveyed and the water-bearing land has been purchased outright by the Los Angeles Water Commissioners. The last options marking the success of the negotiations have been closed.

By a pledged expenditure that will aggregate \$1,000,000, the Los Angeles water department has obtained possession of all the water rights that will give to the city a supply equal to at least ten times the flow of the Los Angeles River.

The enterprise is one of titanic proportions; the reality transcends the flights of imagination. The engineers say that a few centuries ago Owens River was a tributary to the Los Angeles River; that a mighty earthquake threw mountain ranges across the river bed, making the stream tributary to a salt lake, and that they have evolved a feasible plan for tunneling these mountains and bringing the water again into the San Fernando Valley.

ENORMOUS SUPPLY.

Not only will the water be sufficient for the domestic needs of Los Angeles, even though our population increases to a couple of millions, but there will be a surplus sufficient to supply Pasadena, Long Beach, Santa Monica and half a dozen other suburban cities.

For four years we must wait; it will require that length of time to bore the thirty miles of tunnels through the mountain ranges. Then will Los Angeles county indeed become the Garden of Eden. Land as precious as milk and honey will be the flow of the pure mountain water—aye, more precious than gold and diamonds. It means the regeneration of the San Fernando Valley. No longer will it be necessary for the city to deprive the struggling ranchers of the waters of the Los Angeles River. It will be possible for them to develop the entire flow of the river to agriculture.

Once this water was deemed so precious that the right of the city to its use was challenged and fought through the Supreme Court of the United States.

A DOZEN STREAMS.

Now the Water Commissioners hold options on the flow of a dozen streams, each of which is considerably larger than the Los Angeles River. The mean amount of water taken from the river at any one time is 3000 inches. A number of the tributaries to the Owens River flow from five to eight thousand inches.

The flow of the Los Angeles river has been valued at \$25,000,000. Only last week the department water commissioners bought a stream flowing over 5000 inches for \$11,000.

Truly the Lord has been good to Southern California," said Mayor McAlister when, after three days' desert travel, he stood in the shadow of Mt. Whitney and viewed for the first time the new source of Los Angeles' water supply.

Working in secret, bound by a pledge which, through all the months of preliminary surveys and negotiations involving options on more than 100,000 acres of land, has never been broken, the officials of the water department have paved the way for the consummation of the greatest scheme for water development ever attempted on the American continent.

THE LAND DEAL.

In order that this development might be made possible it was necessary to buy outright all the private land in the

THE Times announces this morning the most important movement for the development of Los Angeles in all the city's history—the closing of the preliminary negotiations securing 30,000 inches of water, or about ten times our present total supply, enough for a city of 2,000,000 people. In brief, the project is to bring this water to Los Angeles from Owens River in Inyo county, a distance of 240 miles, at a cost of about \$23,000,000. Options on the water-bearing lands have been closed by the city's representatives and a series of bond issues will be asked of the voters. This new water supply, immense and unfailing, will make Los Angeles forge ahead by leaps and bounds and remove every specter of drought or enormous stream of the purest mountain water pouring in here, Los Angeles best supplies in the land; she will have water to sell to the San Fernando Valley; she will have assured her future for a century. There is no will be forthcoming.

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The engineers now all agree on what he first surmised: that waters of the Owens River centuries ago flowed down through the arid valley from what is now Owens Lake, passing near the present site of Mojave and finally emptying into the Los Angeles River in the San Fernando Valley.

A series of mighty upheavals dislocated the ribs of a number of the lesser Sierras, throwing mountains across the path of the stream and for ten centuries at least the river has emptied into Owens Lake.

This lake is a great stretch of water ten miles wide and thirty miles long. Its waters are so permeated with soda that they contain no living thing.

The engineers contemplate cutting through the mountains that block the path of the river and bringing a canal from Charles's Butte, a foothill midway between Independence and Lone Pine, by way of Mojave to Los Angeles.

All the plans have been approved by the government engineers. By expending about \$150,000 in cash for options and by guaranteeing the payment of over \$700,000 more, the Water Commissioners have pledged the city to build this conduit.

Ex-Mayor Eaton has acted as the city's agent in all the negotiations. The farmer folk in the Owens River Valley think that he has gone daffy on stock raising. To them he is a millionaire with a fad.

INDEPENDENCE SACRIFICED.

It is the village of Independence that will probably be hardest hit. The town is kept alive partly by the trade of the ranchers in the valley, and partly by the travel to and from the gold fields of Western Nevada. The trail to Goldfield and Bullfrog passes through Independence and is one of the star stations on the route.

A number of the unsuspecting ranchers have regarded the appearance of

canal from Lone Pine to Mojave. A great deal of the territory lies in a gold-bearing district. The sands in the bed of the Owens River are, in many places, rich with placer gold. Some of the tunnels will be run through buttes in which are promising ledges of gold and copper ore.

Already the engineers are recalling



SUPT. MULHOLLAND, of Waterworks.

the tales of the time when the Southern Pacific built its first line into Los Angeles—the time when the Chinamen on the work quit because they could make more money washing gold in their shovels.

U. S. GOVERNMENT CONCESSIONS

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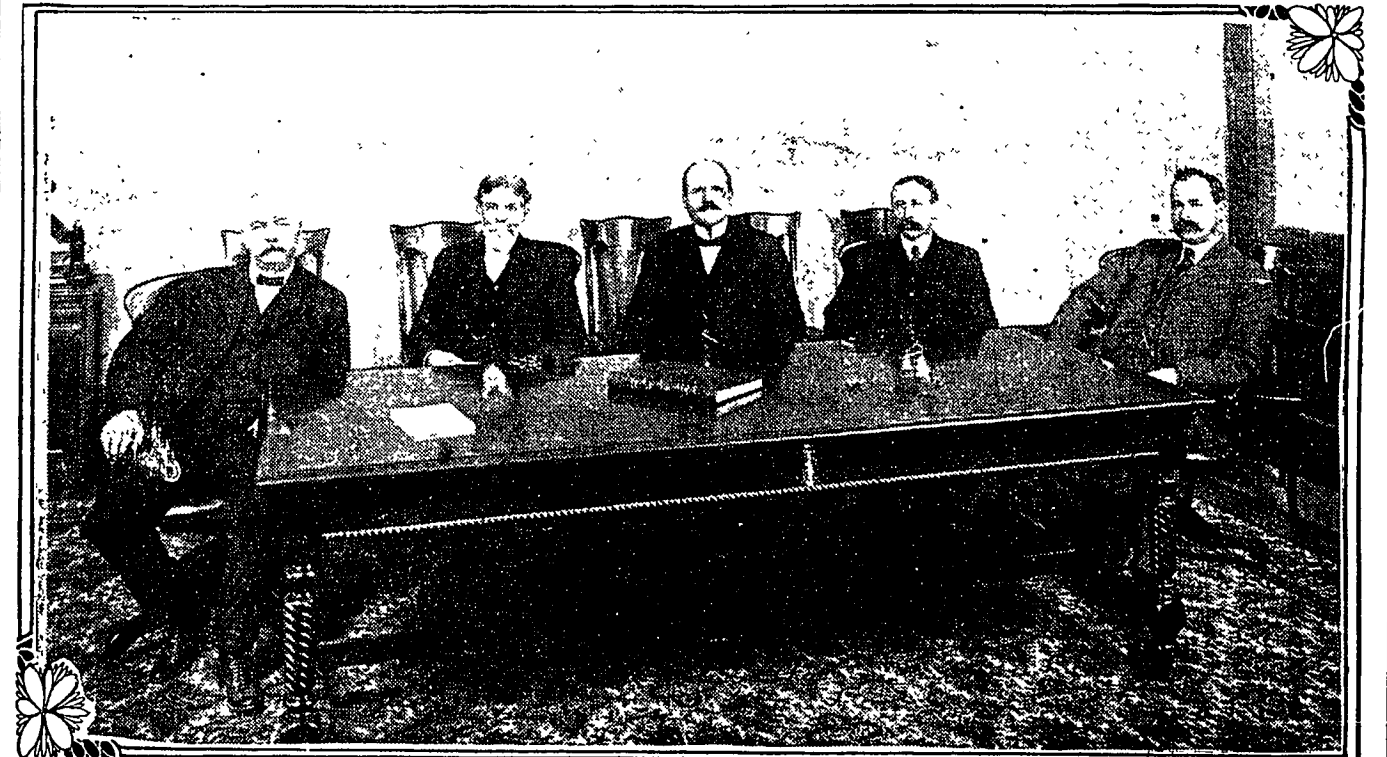
Says Options are Fixed and Los Angeles Becomes Owner of Thirty Thousand Inches of Purest Snow Water—Would Give All the Credit to Others.

Scorched and browned by the almost intolerable desert wind and sun Superintendent Mulholland returned yesterday afternoon from a daring nine days' automobile trip into the heart of the Owens River country, bearing the glad tidings that "the last spike has been driven; the options are all secured; the deal by which Los Angeles city becomes the owner of thirty thousand inches of the purest snow water has been nailed."

In the excited gratification born of a knowledge that the vexed water question has at last been solved, Mulholland laughed like a schoolboy.

"Fred Eaton did it. He has been working on it for thirteen years. He is the greatest natural engineer that the West has ever known. He has cured the deal by which Los Angeles city becomes the owner of thirty thousand inches of the purest snow water has been nailed."

What Mulholland did not say was that he himself had made it possible for Eaton to finance his scheme; that he has made five trips on foot



Los Angeles Water Board, which secures 30,000 inches of water for the city. From left to right, J. J. Fay, J. M. Elliott, M. H. Sherman, William Mead, Fred L. Baker.

miles of river front north of Owens Lake. This includes practically every riparian water right in the southern end of the valley.

Purchase of the private land alone meant buying outright a valley in which are located over 2000 people. It probably means the wiping out of the town of Independence, which has a population of over 500 and a number of lesser villages. Already the options on all this land have been secured.

Four years' time will be required to bore the thirty miles of tunnels that will bring the flow of Owens River through the mountain ranges that intervene between Owens Lake and the headworks of the water system in the San Fernando Valley.

Digging these tunnels and building the canals will mean a cost of approximately \$23,000,000—one-seventh of the total assessed valuation of all city property.

But it is an enterprise in which the end would justify the expenditure were it three times the cost.

Water is the treasure of the Southwest. Where the canals flow there is wealth before which the fabled treasures of And are but bits of cut and colored glass.

HUNDRED MILES OF SNOWSHEDS

The Owens River is fed by gigantic snowsheds five miles in width and over a hundred miles long. These are a part of the mother range of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. They are located in the northern portion of Inyo county near the Nevada line.

For years the Owens River Valley has been valued only as stock-raising territory. The land is not very fertile and, despite the inexhaustible supply of mountain water, unprofitable to cultivate.

It is to ex-Mayor Fred Eaton that Los Angeles owes the discovery of the possibility of bringing the waters of the flow of this snowshed to Los Angeles.

For thirteen years Mr. Eaton has been working on this plan. During the last seven months he has had the cooperation of Superintendent Mulholland and of United States Engineers Lippincott and Perkins.

An engineer himself, Mr. Eaton ob-

served during a number of trips to his son's ranch near Independence, the peculiar formation of the land along the route of the wagon road from Mojave to the Owens River Valley.

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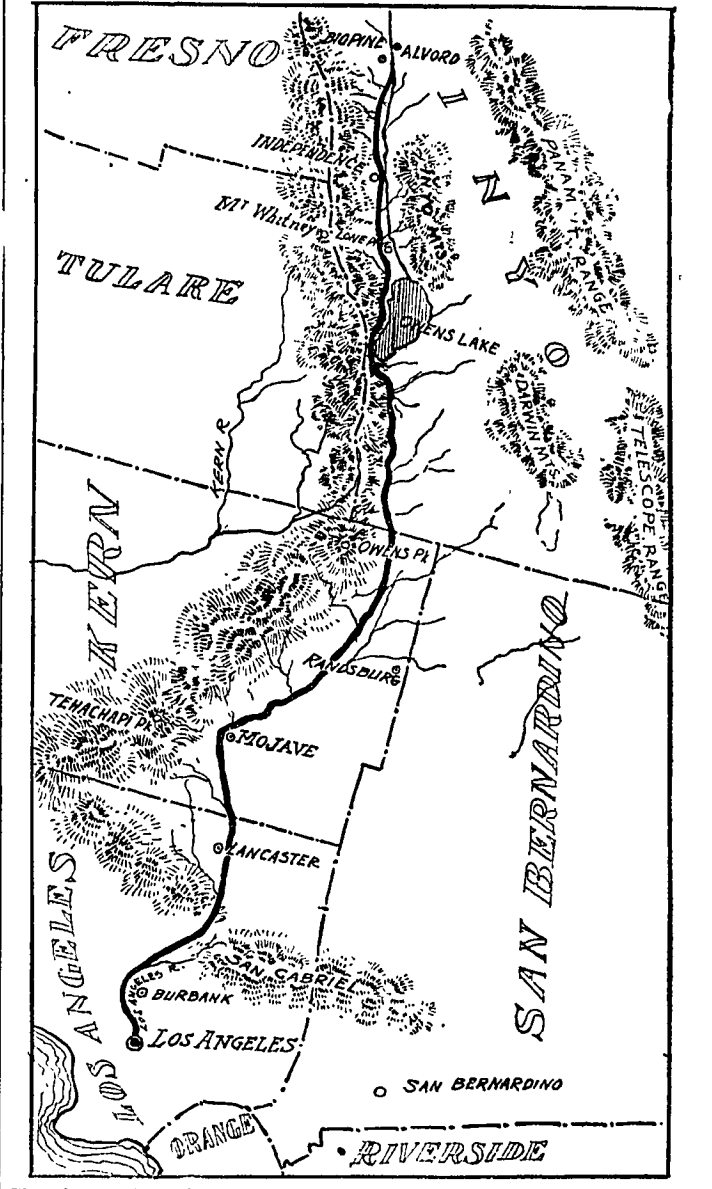
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Showing route of 240-mile conduit from Owens River to Los Angeles.

FINANCIAL DARING IN GETTING OPTIONS.

IT WAS the very daring of the proposal to buy a nature valley, the most valuable in Inyo county, and turn it over to the city for the water rights involved that has made the negotiations a success.

Water rumors have been so frequent and so false in the Sierra country that mention of the possibility that Los Angeles would go so far for its water supply was regarded by the ranchers as bar-room gossip.

It was like the periodical discovery of the For Lost money, something that happens once a month, and yet never occurs.

The chief difficulty encountered was the Los Angeles end. A municipal enterprise is always considered the lawful prey of a small army of petty grafters. There are a thousand of them here who would have considered it a shipwreck of business to slide up into the Owens Lake country and secure a few options in advance of Mr. Eaton, to turn them over at a profit.

That the purchases have been made without the necessity of rebuying a single option from other than the city reflects great credit on all parties concerned.

The first \$50,000 was expended after the trip made by the Mayor, the City Attorney and the Water Commissioners Fay and Elliott. It was a heart-breaking trip that came near costing Mr. Elliott his life.

This party went into the valley ostensibly for the purpose of inspecting Mr. Whitney with a view to forming a company and advertising the place as a great summer resort.

This is the story agreed to by the party when they left Mojave. But it came much nearer to the truth than they then imagined. When the party put up the second night at a little hotel at the foot of the mountain, arriving just in time for a view of a sunset on Mt. Whitney, they came near forgetting the real object of their mission.

It was the grandest sunset I ever witnessed; the Alps are no more to be compared to it than a sandhill to Old Baldy. That little frontier village clinging to the mountain side will one day become the most famous mountain resort on the continent.

This is the statement of one of the commissioners, made four weeks after the trip.

This little resort is on the western skirts of the Sierras. From there the water flows into the Kern River, and into the San Joaquin Valley country.

At Mr. Whitney they passed over to the eastern slope of the Sierras, and were soon in the Owens Lake country.

There the party spent five days tracing a number of the mountain streams to their sources, even ascending some of the lesser Sierras.

Two days ago the streams were flowing over 20,000 inches of water. This, too, in the season when we need the water most. In that we are peculiarly fortunate. The streams are highest there in June, July and August. Those are the months when we need the water most here. But the mean flow of those streams for the year round during the last five years has been 25,000 million gallons of water a day.

By the purchase of the land we have secured the riparian rights to every inch of that water. It is enough to reclaim almost half the arid but otherwise arable land in Los Angeles county.

COMPLETE SURVEY OF THE ROUTE

By which the water will be brought into the San Fernando Valley have been made. My men have been working on that for six months.

THIRTY MILES OF TUNNELS.

There will be about thirty miles of tunnels, chiefly between Mojave and the San Fernando Valley. I have estimated the aggregate cost of the construction of the canal to be \$21,000,000.

We shall use no pipe, but expect to bring the water here by a gravity flow in a concrete conduit large enough to carry 30,000 inches of water. The tunnels will make this possible.

Some of those tunnels will be im-

pressed were they with the seemingly inexhaustible supply of water that Mr. Eaton started to getting options without further ado. This, of course, was without official authority, but the members of the party decided that it was time to act and act quickly; they felt that they could not take any chances on letting anyone else, no, not even the United States government, get ahead of them.

This action later received the official endorsement of the Water Board. Since then all the deeds to property and abstracts have passed through the City Attorney's office. The City Attorney himself has placed his O.K. on every transaction.

Then followed a series of correspondence with F. H. Newell, chief of the United States Reclamation Department, conducted from this end through J. B. Lippincott, United States engineer. At first the department chief was suspicious lest the water was being obtained for use by private parties. Mr. Lippincott convinced the Washington authorities that the city of Los Angeles is the real purchaser and the government agreed to stand aside and give Los Angeles an opportunity to utilize the Owens River water supply.

All this time Mr. Eaton was busily engaged in getting options from the ranchers and cattle raisers throughout the length and breadth of the valley. The number of schemes which the farmer folk put up on Mr. Eaton to induce him to buy grazing land that in reality was little else than a lava bed and a few scattered trees, was so large that he had to grow old in Independence with the telling. The Eaton stood with them all and never got "wise" was one of the never-ceasing wonders in the valley.

Superintendent Mulholland and the government engineers now tell many a merry tale of the deceptions that these simple folk worked upon themselves, fancying all the time that the joke was on Eaton. Some of them even went to the expense of artificial irrigation by hauling water in wagons to dampen arid soil, hoping to get a better price for it.

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